

REMARKS

Applicant acknowledges that the Examiner has cited U.S. Patent No's. 5,513,871 (**Johnson**) and 4,699,395 (**Hale**) as disclosing the use of a padlock for locking a trailer hitch of the type utilized in the present invention. Applicant has amended the claims pending and under examination in this application to reflect that the claimed invention constitutes more than simply the attachment of a padlock to the prior art structure of the trailer hitch.

Claim 8 has been amended, first to eliminate unnecessary references in the preamble of the claim directed to the prior art structure, and second to more accurately describe the structure of the elements used for releasably locking the prior art trailer hitch configuration.

Claim 9 has likewise been amended to further limit the structure of one of the elements (the hasp bar) identified in Claim 8. Claims 17 through 19 further limit the structures of the elements described in Claim 8 and Claim 9.

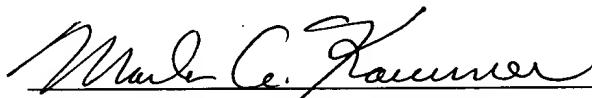
Applicant would point out that the use of a padlock in each of the cited references entails attachment of the lock in a position quite different from the structures of the present invention. In other words, nothing in the cited references would teach the use of the elements of the present invention, as structured, at the locations and in the positions defined and claimed. Applicant therefore requests that the Examiner reconsider the rejection of the claims in view of the claim amendments submitted herewith.

Applicant has cancelled Claims 10 and 11 as being directed to detailed geometries of various structures in the invention that are no longer relevant given the amendments to Claims 8 and 9. Applicant has cancelled Claims 15 and 16 (method claims) solely for the purpose of streamlining the prosecution of the apparatus claims in the present application and to avoid confusing the structures claimed. Applicant notes that the present set of claims constitutes an

elected invention based on a restriction requirement initially presented in the case. Further claims, including method claims, will be pursued in subsequently filed divisional applications.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the application by the current Amendment. The attached page is captioned "Version with Markings to Show Changes Made." Applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Respectfully submitted,



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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

In the Claims:

Claims 10, 11, 15 and 16 have been cancelled.

Claim 8 has been amended as follows:

8. (amended) A locking apparatus for a gooseneck trailer hitch[, the gooseneck trailer hitch] having [a tubular sheathing member, a stationary plate fixedly attached to the sheathing member, the stationary plate having a cavity for receiving a hitch ball and a flange with a first aperture for receiving a latch pin, a lock plate pivotally connected to the stationary plate, the lock plate having a second aperture for receiving a hitch ball,] a [retainer bracket fixedly attached to the lock plate, the] retainer bracket [having a central opening] defining a slot in which [the flange of the stationary] an extension of a hitch ball engagement plate is slidably disposed, [the retainer bracket further having a third aperture for receiving a latch pin, a handle guide depending from the sheathing member, a handle slidably disposed in the handle guide, the handle having a latch pin capable of insertion into the first aperture of the stationary plate and the third aperture of the retainer bracket to immobilize the lock plate in a closed position in which the second aperture of the lock plate is partially misaligned with the cavity of the stationary plate such that a hitch ball is prevented from being inserted into or removed from the cavity, said] the locking apparatus comprising:

[a lock comprising a body and] a hasp bar[, said hasp being capable of insertion] insertable into [the central opening] said slot of the retainer bracket adjacent [the flange of the stationary] said extension of said hitch ball engagement plate such that [the lock] said plate is substantially immobilized [in the closed position] within said slot; and means for releasably

locking said hasp bar in said slot of said retainer bracket so as to alternately prevent and permit movement of said hitch ball engagement plate within said slot.

Claim 9 has been amended as follows:

9. (amended) The locking apparatus of claim 8 wherein said gooseneck trailer hitch further comprises a movable latch handle adjacent said retainer bracket and said hasp bar [is further capable of capturing the handle of the gooseneck trailer hitch] engages said latch handle upon insertion into said slot of said retainer bracket so as to alternately prevent and permit movement of said latch handle.

Claim 17 has been added as follows:

17. The locking apparatus of claim 8 wherein said means for releasably locking said hasp bar comprises a key operated locking mechanism fixable on a first end of said hasp bar.

Claim 18 has been added as follows:

18. The locking apparatus of Claim 8 wherein said means for releasably locking said hasp bar comprises a code operated combination locking mechanism fixable on a first end of said hasp bar.

Claim 19 has been added as follows:

19. The locking apparatus of claim 9 wherein said hasp bar comprises a "U" shaped bar and said means for releasably locking said hasp bar comprises a key operated locking mechanism fixable on first and second ends of said hasp bar, wherein said latch handle is engaged by said

hasp bar by being positioned within said "U" shaped bar prior to fixing said locking mechanism thereon.